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"BE A STRONG AMERICAN"

A Health Program in Idaho

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Four and a half million youth unsound--rejected because they were not fit to fight! That's the appalling picture of the health of the Nation as reported by General Hershey and uncovered by the selective service program. And 41 percent were youth from rural areas!

What's being done about it? Well, much planning is going on--many agencies are going into high gear to correct the situation--not to make youth healthy for war but to help build their bodies for peace.

And 4-H Club members, too, have been doing something about it for a long time. The fourth "H" is for health. "I pledge my health to better living" is part of the club pledge known by every single one of the 1,700,000 members.

Improving the health of that many young people is no small job. The first step is to create a health consciousness, say the State and National 4-H leaders. But all hands need to work together to get results.

Take Idaho, for instance. State health people and State supervisors from the board of education got together to work out a health program for young people in cooperation with Dan Warren, State 4-H Club leader. A program based on "Learn about your health in everyday living and do something about it" evolved. "Our job will be not only to find the healthiest boys and girls but also to strive to improve the health of all our young people," says Dan Warren, State 4-H Club leader. The health program through 4-H Club work was organized in cooperation with schools, health and medical people, and specialists in 18 counties. The young people study food and nutrition, disease, and cleanliness; give demonstrations; keep health-improvement records; and learn what makes the body "tick" and how to protect it. County nurses examine members at the start and finish of the program. It is a "doing" program--with each member doing something about his No. 1 job, "Keep healthy." Appeals like "good grooming" and "I will become a strong American" were tied in.

Results? Well, health is hard to measure, but if Bannock County is any indication of what can be done, it looks as if Idaho youth would not be in the upper bracket of rejection--come a "selective service for peace" 15 or 20 years from now.

Let's look at the following record:

RECORD OF HEALTH-IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM  
BANNOCK COUNTY, IDAHO, 1944

Summarized by Dan Warren

Studies of 4-H records summarized in Bannock County showed that the health project was really needed in the rural areas. Two county health unit nurses examined 249 club members at the beginning and end of the project and reported the following results:

Beginning	Normal	Defective	Percentage Defective	Number	Percentage of correc- tion (after 9 months)
Eyes	225	24	11.48	12	50
Ears	243	6	2.40	0	0
Nose	249	0	0	0	0
Throat	209	40	16.06	17	42.5
Teeth	81	168	67.46	58	34.52
Posture	176	73	29.31	21	28.76

There was an acute shortage of dentists in the county, and this probably accounted for the 67.46 percent of the members needing tooth repair. Several children were observed with 6 or 7 molars decayed beyond repair.

The same 249 club members' records were shown and checked on food and health habits. The yardstick of good nutrition was used as a standard for a perfect score. On this basis the following results were obtained:

Food and Health Habits	Adequate	Deficient	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Improved (after 9 months)
Milk	204	45	18.07	16	35.55		
Citrus fruit	129	120	48.19	38	31.66		
Fruit	127	122	48.99	34	27.86		
Vegetables	136	113	45.38	39	34.51		
Raw vegetables	96	153	63.44	33	21.56		
Potatoes	169	80	32.12	16	20.0		
Lean meat, fresh	152	97	38.95	31	31.95		
Eggs	172	77	30.92	23	29.87		
Bread	211	38	15.26	5	13.15		
Fat or butter	210	39	15.66	10	25.46		
Eats at regular hours	170	79	31.72	27	34.17		
Sweets at meals only	100	149	59.83	36	24.16		
Eats any food	175	74	29.71	13	17.56		
Chews food thoroughly	194	55	22.08	9	16.36		
Normal bowel movement	183	66	31.57	10	15.15		
Sleeps 10 hrs. regularly	131	118	47.38	20	16.95		

Citrus fruits, other fruits, vegetables, raw vegetables, and meats were the foods most commonly deficient. Health habits needing correction most commonly were eating at irregular hours, insufficient sleep, and constipation.

THROUGH THE AID OF THE EXTENSION AGENT, THE SCHOOLS, AND NURSES, 12 YOUNG PEOPLE OBTAINED GLASSES, 17 CORRECTED CONDITIONS OF INFECTED TONSILS AND SORE THROATS, 58 OBTAINED DENTAL WORK NEEDED, 21 MADE IMPROVEMENTS IN POSTURE, AND 115 IMPROVED HEALTH HABITS.